

Help! I'm turning into a Mean girl..

Me:

Shall we get started on the message? So we've been this mini series in the evening services over the last couple weeks called 'Movies that made me'. We've had some great ones so far! Ande preached on Gladiator a couple of weeks ago. Who enjoyed that? And we had a phenomenal message from Ian last Sunday! #It'sNotOverYet

These were great film choices right! Epic films. When we were planning these messages, we going through like, 'Ande, you can preach on gladiator, HOORAH' and 'Ian, you've got Braveheart. FREEDOM' I'm not gonna lie, I was thinking, 300. it's got to be 300! It's a movie of a similar style. An epic! So imagine my suppressed disappointment when I was not given 300 but... errr Mean Girls. 'Sam, you can preach on Mean Girls'

Yeah. Cool, no worries, I can do Mean Girls... Not quite the epic I was hoping for but no worries.. A bad workman blames his tools.. So game on!

I actually thought I had seen the film but it turns out I hadn't.

So I watched Mean Girls. By myself actually.. I think Esther was busy. It was very weird for me... But I watched it anyway. No matter how hard I tried I couldn't make the film into an 'Epic'...

You know how we say that if God can speak through a sunset he can speak through a film set? I always believed that but when I came to this film, I was really like 'God you've really got to pull something out of the bag here!' But you know what surprised me? That actually it's crazy how God can use a movie about horrible teenagers to speak truth into your life...

So, let me sum up the story for those of you haven't seen the film.

Mean Girls follows the story of a young girl called Caddie (NOT Caddy) as she moves from Africa to a high school in the US. She was a bright student and a kind person. But the thing is Caddie had been home schooled all her life and was almost completely unaware of how adolescent America functioned. So imagine how she struggled when thrust into this new, daunting environment called 'high school'. It was a new start a blank canvas. A chance to reinvent herself. Caddie's first few days were ok, she managed to make some friends who seemed to accept her as she was. Things seemed to be going well until she met the plastics.

Show clip.

Thank God it's not Wednesday! Have you ever felt like you're on the right path, doing the right thing but something, someone comes along and hits you like a truck and takes you off your path?

Life was going well for Caddie until her parents decided to move to the US... everything was unknown for Caddie.. She didn't know what was the right way of doing things in this new society. Caddie had been brought up one way, her new friends had a different way of living but then the plastics seemed to be the pinnacle of the school society. Was their way the right way? Imagine the crossroads caddie must have experienced.

The Plastics did end up pulling Caddie into their world and their way of living. Caddie was living one way with the plastics and another with her friends. She was torn, she knew hanging out with them was turning her into someone she didn't want to be and didn't like but at the same time, these girls were the most popular girls in the school. Becoming a 'plastic' was surely the path to being happy! Right? These girls seemed to know what 'real living' was. They seemed to have it figured out.

Slowly but surely, Caddie couldn't maintain her double life, living one way with her friends and another with the plastics and she became the thing she despised. Her grades dropped, she lost her friends - even winning spring fling queen (I can't remember what it was called..) didn't fulfil her. Caddie became trapped by the things that she thought would give her freedom/a fulfilled life. But instead she became a 'mean girl'. Shallow, mean, a backstabber, self centred, jealous. She had never initially intended to become a 'mean girl' or have the attributes or character of the plastics... but now she did and she hated who she'd become.

We:

Remove yourself from the context of a teenage chick flick and let's look into our own lives, our own experiences. Sometimes we can be like Caddie. We never intended to do the things we've done or be the person we've become but whether by lack of judgement, guidance, desire, we've become something we never wanted to be. We've

picked up attributes, characteristics that we know are damaging ourselves and the people around us but now we don't know how to get out of the hole we've dug ourselves into... We don't know how to change who we've become or how we act.

We don't know why we've lashing out at people, why we've been rude or self centred. Why we've been pushing away those close to us, or why we've cheated on our values or morals we once held so strongly to. The more we look at ourselves, the more we see we've become MEAN GIRLS!!!!

So... if you need a title for my message tonight, it would be: **HELP! I've become a Mean Girl.**

God:

I believe the first step to discovering why we have become the person we have, is understanding what set us on this path in the first place.

I think we can see from Caddie situation some things that could help us identify this. See, she started becoming shallow, mean, a backstabber, self centred, jealous **once** she put her value in being a *plastic*.

You see you will always bare fruit that reflects what you are rooted in.

But the bible actually says that the way you live will dictate the fruit of your life. Just as if a plant rooted in toxic soil will not bare good fruit, if you are rooted in the wrong things you won't bare good fruit..

Paul outlines this is in Galatians 5:

Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

Life by the Spirit

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh[a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." [b] **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever[c] you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

You see, the bible identifies that it is what we are chasing that dictates and shapes our characteristics and attributes..

Being mean, didn't make caddie a mean girl. Chasing the wrong lifestyle did. When she put her focus on being a 'plastic', being popular, she started bearing the fruit of living a life of the 'flesh'.

Now I know that most of you (I hope) aren't caught up in witchcraft but what about the other things?

Galatians outlines the results of living a life of the flesh..

Galatians 5:13 (TPT)

19 The cravings of the self-life are obvious: Sexual immorality, lustful thoughts, pornography, **20** chasing after things instead of God, [h] manipulating others, [i] hatred of those who get in your way, senseless arguments, resentment when others are favoured, temper tantrums, angry quarrels, only thinking of yourself, being in love with your own opinions, **21** being envious of the blessings of others, murder, uncontrolled addictions, [j] wild parties, and all other similar behaviour.

These are the a result of living a 'self-life'. Who here looks at that list and would say they would like to be like that? We don't go out of our way to be envious. Today I think I want to find someone to be jealous of....

You see there attributes of a 'self-life' are not only damaging to others but they are damaging to ourselves as well. This is not the way God intended us to live..

But the bible say that if we live by the spirit of God, keep in step with the spirit of God, the fruits of our life will be soooo much better!

22–23 But the fruit[] produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions:[m]

joy *that overflows*,[n]
peace *that subdues*,
patience[o] *that endures*,
kindness[p] *in action*,
a life full of virtue,[q]
faith *that prevails*,
gentleness of heart, and
strength of spirit.[r]

See God has set out a life of freedom, a life of purpose for us that will yield fruit that will not damage and destroy us but help us live our best life! If you don't like the person you've become, look at what your life built around. What are you rooted in? Your self interest or Gods interests for you?

But... before I go any further tonight I would like to mix it up. I would like to bring up some friends of mine who are going to help me. I have my very own 'plastics' BUT.. with much more reputable character!

Intro the panel.

You:

So I talked a little bit already about the difference that chasing a life focused on yourself (A life of the flesh) has on your character, habits, actions, compared with a life chasing God plan for you which yield the fruits of the spirit:

Love
joy
peace
patience
kindness
goodness
faithfulness
gentleness
self control

What I wanted to do with you guys was to unpackage your thoughts on how we navigate this tension between living a 'self life' and living in step with the Holy Spirit.

What's so bad with a bit of jealousy, wild parties? Can't i still love my neighbour as my friend and have a good time?

Dave: Can we chase the things of the flesh and still be in step with the spirit of God?

Romans 8:8-17 (NIV)

Pleasing the flesh is not pleasing God

Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.

Death or life? You choose

¹²Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.

Being in step with the spirit of God means...

- We involve God in our struggles, our temptations, our human-ness
- We open up our lives to the potential that God has to change us for the better
- We commit to becoming more like Christ
- We recognise that we do not have all the answers but look to a God who does
- We please God as we get to know our true identity...child of God (He is our good father...he wants to guide us through life, protect us and give us a hope for the future)

Scott: Does selfish living really separate us from the call God has on our lives?

Absolutely. I don't think you can live selfishly alongside a selfless God. The whole Jesus thing was for Him to come and serve, not to be served. God is a selfless God, and so we have got to be able to be selfless people. I mean we look at one of my favourite bits in the New Testament, Matthew 21.

This is an account of people within the temple selling doves and goats to sacrifice, lending out money, selling and trading in the House of God. Jesus comes in kicking everyone out and flipping over tables, and when he's done he heals the lame and the blind right then and there. I don't think God has a problem with selling things in church – I mean we sell coffee and books here!

I think what Jesus was frustrated about was that people were putting themselves first. They were there to make money, scam those coming to the temple – not to focus on God or on others. I think that if that frustrated Jesus, the son of the living god, enough to throw some tables around, we need to get frustrated in our own lives to through our attitude around. We can't afford to live focused on ourselves, because we are inhibiting those who need to hear the gospel from meeting Jesus. We can get so distracted by ourselves that we miss what God is trying to do in us, and more importantly – through us.

Scott: What influences us to live a life of the flesh?

Influences are the things we put above ourselves. What other people think about you, popularity, the spotlight, chasing the crowd, relationships, short term satisfaction – not necessarily bad in themselves, but the very fact that they are influences mean that they become directors of your life, steering your journey in a certain direction.

I think that when it comes to Christians, one of the reasons we put other influences over our life instead of God, is simply because we don't trust Him. We don't believe God or trust that He has the best intentions for us. If we did trust that God has got us covered, then I don't think we would need to talk about walking with God – because we would all be doing it.

But catch this – in Proverbs 3 it says "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight". I think our path becomes curved when our influence and trust is misplaced. God said that HE would make our path straight – but in order to do that, we've got to lean on God, submit to Him, let go and let God, and trust that actually the Lord of Lords and King of Kings can and will protect you wherever you go, that He has gone before you and He's got your back. We have got to turn the tables of influence around, putting those short term satisfactions beneath us and trust God to influence the direction of our lives – that He will make our paths clear and straight.

Luke: How do we keep in step with the Spirit?

I think it's about making room for him in every part of our lives and remembering to include him and turn to him. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 says to "pray without ceasing". It's about taking those moments in your day to recognise

that the Holy Spirit is present, to welcome him into whatever situation your in, to appreciate to wonders of God and his creation, and to ask for his help in whatever you're facing.

Dave: When we mess up, does that mean that we've ruined our chance to live the life God has called us to?

Before Jesus walked the earth, the answer would have been a lot shorter....in a word YES. As we look in the first books of the Bible, particularly at the journey of God's chosen people (The Israelites) we see that so much time was wasted walking round in circles because of unbelief and disobedience. Many of the people never saw the promised land.

The Old Testament way of bringing justice to a situation was a good stoning....job done...nothing like a stoning to ruin chances of living a life for God.

But the good news of course is that in Jesus we have the answer to our question, which because of him now answers a lot differently.

Ephesians 2 (MSG)

He Tore Down the Wall

2¹⁻⁸ It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah.

- He saved us and He calls us to an exciting and purposeful life
- As a lyric in the song, 'Heart of God' says: Your kindness leads us to repentance, to the Heart of God...In the words of Justin Bieber...'Is it too late now to say sorry?' NO

Luke: If I'm not bearing all the fruits of the Spirit, am I doing something wrong? Does that mean I'm not living Gods way?

Pretty much! We're not perfect, and not exhibiting all of the fruits of the Spirit at every moment of our lives is a reflection of that. We are all works in progress. As we walk in step with the Spirit, and as we deepen our relationship with God, we'll see this fruit increasing in our lives. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says we "are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory." It's a continual process. In the months and years to come we'll look back and think 'I'm not as impatient with people as I used to be', or 'I really feel peace like I never have before' and that's the Spirit at work in you.

Luke: How do we balance loving people vs being influenced by the wrong people?

I don't think there is a balance as such. We're instructed to love everyone, just as Jesus loved everyone — love is unconditional and all encompassing. But loving someone does not mean that you allow them to influence you in every area of your life. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says:

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good character."

So it's clear that we need to be careful of the company we keep.

Jesus, being perfect, gives us the perfect example of how to love everybody without being influenced by just anybody. He made time for everyone, he would speak to anyone, he was even called a friend of sinners because he spent time with those that his religious society rejected. And every word he spoke he spoke in love. To a woman caught in adultery, he said "neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more" which was the most loving thing he could've said because he wanted her to change. He called the religious leaders hypocrites, full of wickedness, but his motivation was love so that they could see the truth and turn back to God. Loving someone does not mean agreeing with them or their actions.

Us:

Dave: Do you believe there is a need for us to live God's way?

Because I believe it's the answer to humanity's cry for rescue.

We look at the world and it's full of confusion, pain, suffering, self-loathing, mistrust.

This is how humans do when we remove God from our lives.

Genesis 1:26

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature So they can be responsible..." (for the animals etc.)

- We were designed by God and this means we carry something of His image. Whether we wear this or hide this is our choice. BUT...this is our true identity and when we know it and walk in it, we discover so much more about the purpose of life and the joy that comes from knowing a life lived with Him very much in the picture.

Going back to a passage of scripture in **Romans 8...**

¹⁶For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, "You are God's beloved child!"

¹⁷And since we are his true children, we qualify to share all his treasures, for indeed, we are heirs of God himself. And since we are joined to Christ, we also inherit all that he is and all that he has.¹⁸ We will experience being co-glorified with him provided that we accept his sufferings¹⁹ as our own.²⁰

Why would we not want to experience life in all its fullness...a life that experiences God on this earth and then continues into eternity.

A life of purpose

A life lived without crushing fear

A life lived with the knowledge that God is with us

Luke: Why is God's purpose so important?

God's purpose is see the Kingdom of God established on earth. Jesus said in Luke 19:10 that he "came to seek and to save the lost." That should be exactly what drives us too. We as a church are motivated by that same cause, and our vision is the salvation of our city. The significance if that moment when someone chooses to connect with Jesus can't possibly be overstated — they become a new creation, the old goes and the new comes, and the trajectory of the life is altered completely with eternal ramifications. This is why we give our lives to introducing people to Jesus.

Sam:

That's so true Luke.

Many of us sat here today know that we are not perfect, that we haven't got it all together but that although we may not like who we are at times or how we act, we know that we are on a journey and as Luke said earlier: 2 Corinthians 3:18 says we "are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory." It's a continual process.

And it's when we walk in step with the Spirit of God, our lives start to yield the fruit of the spirit:

Imagine the people who don't know Jesus, who don't keep in step with the spirit. Who may be struggling with the same things we are but they don't know the source of the fruits of the spirit. They don't know that it comes from a relationship with a loving, living God!

Imagine the impact, the change in peoples lives if they knew the source of Joy, if they knew the source of

Love
peace
patience

kindness
goodness
faithfulness
gentleness
self control

When we hold back from telling people about Jesus, when we stop inviting our friends and family to church, we are withholding from them the KEY to all these things:

We are holding back the life that God has in store for them. A life of purpose, fullness, joy...

So we choose the live Gods way so that other around our city, the people we rub shoulders with day to day, our friends our family can connect with God and they too can walk in step with his spirit.